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Mr. Michael K. Powell, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
Some Street
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Powell,

Allowing more consolidation of media ownership would limit American politics and culture, so I urge you to maintain your agency's current requirements.

You will hear from many other commentators about the economic arguments against allowing fewer owners to control media in local markets. My emphasis is on the threat monopoly ownership poses to a free press and, even more fundamentally, freedom of speech.

Throughout our nation's history, it has been the plethora of arguments served up in public - e.g., the Federalist papers, Thomas Paine's pamphlets, the Pentagon Papers, "muck-raking" journalists like I.F. Stone - that have kept the U.S. more on-course toward "Liberty for All" than any other nation in the world. It is not only freedom from government censorship but also a myriad of venues for every 'dissident,' 'malcontent,' 'visionary,' and patriot to find their arguments broadcast - even if only once (viz. Karen Silkwood) - that undergird our prowess as a free and flexible democracy - and our stature as a beacon to free-thinkers worldwide.

The consolidation effectively proposed by your agency would stifle that competition of ideas which is more important to this country than the profit of any enterprise. It once was only a cynical joke of A.J. Liebling to claim that "freedom of the press belongs to those that own one;" modern technology enables the peril behind that epithet to become real across all communications channels, thus the imperative to encourage as many owners as possible. In view of "cross-channel pollination," look at what happened, in 1999, to the news department of the *Los Angeles Times*.

Finally, it simply is stupid, if not disingenuous, of your bureau to contend that the Internet now can supply most Americans with sufficient media diversity. How many millions of homes in the U.S. still are not connected?! How many of those connected are dedicated to AOL Time Warner and, honestly, never escape that virtual Intranet? The value of diverse media ownership is in its 'pull' among a discriminating audience, not in the 'push' of forcing 'consumers' to choose among the fewest-possible options for weather forecasts and 'infotainment' and whatever else a product-oriented "media corporation" deems valuable.

Please heed the panoptic voices of our nation's people, clamoring to contribute their unique genius to public debate, and not merely the unaltruistic petitions of lobbyists; please ensure that the fabric of American media will continue to be woven from countless, independent strands and not the few that would control the purse-strings under your agency's proposed relaxation of its rules.

Very truly yours,

Kurt C. Wilner

P.S. The result of your agency's change in radio-station regulations, in 1996, has been disastrous, permitting over 1,400 rather independent commentators to sell down to the largest owners, which controlled only 130 stations before the change - while the public listening to those stations grew more diverse. The resulting duplication of commercial programming has forced me to rely almost entirely upon the low end of the FM-radio spectrum, where college and other non-profit stations are found, for the diversity & 'real' news I truly need to function as member of this democracy. (Even there, the saturation by NPR and "Free Speech Radio" effectively homogenizes almost all their 'news-hours' to dead zones for half an hour across the nation, several times a day.)